Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A ball joint ~~comprising~~ comprising:

a ball stud having a spherical head portion and a shaft ~~portion,~~portion; and

a socket coupled with the spherical head portion of the ball stud via a ball seat configured to turn the ball stud in relation to the socket about the spherical center of the spherical head portion, the ball seat including:

a deformation portion of the ball seat configured to elastically deform the ball seat in a rotational direction about the center axis of the shaft portion; and

frictional engagement surfaces located on the inner and outer circumference of the ball seat configured to elastically deform the deformation portion of the ball seat in the rotational direction before the spherical head portion starts sliding in the rotational direction in relation to the deformation portion of the ball seat~~wherein the ball stud can turn in relation to the socket about the spherical center of the spherical head portion, characterized by comprising elastic deformation allowing means for allowing the ball seat to elastically deform in the rotational direction about the center axis of the shaft portion; and in a region corresponding to the elastic deformation allowing means, frictional engagement force generated between the spherical head portion and the ball seat is made greater than that between the ball seat and the socket, whereby when the ball stud rotates about the center axis, the ball seat elastically deforms in the rotational direction before the spherical head portion starts sliding in relation to the ball seat in the region where a larger frictional engagement force is generated~~.

2. (Currently Amended) A ball joint according to claim 1, ~~wherein the~~wherein:

a coefficient of friction between at least part of the surface of the inner circumference of the deformation portion of the ball seat and the surface of the ball stud ~~is constituted by materials having large and small friction coefficients, respectively; in a region where elastic deformation in the rotational direction is permitted by means of the elastic deformation allowing means, a material of large friction coefficient is partially provided~~ is larger than the coefficient of friction between the outer circumference of the deformation portion and the socket, and

a coefficient of friction between at least part of the surface of the outer circumference of not the deformation~~at a~~ portion of the ball seat and the surface of the socket is larger than the coefficient of friction between the inner circumference of not the deformation portion of the ball seat and the ball stud~~which comes into engagement with the spherical head portion, and a material of small friction coefficient is provided at a portion of the ball seat which comes into engagement with the socket; and in a region where elastic deformation in the rotational direction is not permitted by means of the elastic deformation allowing means, the material of large friction coefficient is provided at a portion of the ball seat which comes into engagement with the socket, and the material of small friction coefficient is provided at a portion of the ball seat which comes into engagement with the spherical head portion~~.

3. (Currently Amended) A ball joint according to claim 1, wherein the ~~elastic deformation allowing means~~deformation portion of the ball seat comprises a plurality of slits formed in the ball seat.

4. (Currently Amended) A ball joint according to claim 2, wherein the ~~elastic deformation allowing means~~deformation portion of the ball seat comprises a plurality of slits formed in the ball seat.